



**St Patrick's Primary School  
and Nursery Class  
Strathaven  
South Lanarkshire Council  
18 January 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, children and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well children are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

St Patrick's Primary School is a denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the town of Strathaven and the surrounding rural area of South Lanarkshire. The roll was 139, including 35 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in November 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- The high-quality learning experiences in the nursery.
- Extremely polite, well-behaved children who are very keen to learn.
- The high-quality relationships between children, and between children and staff.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher.
- The commitment to and effective roles played by the principal teacher and all staff in improving the school.

## **3. How well do children learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

In the nursery, children are very enthusiastic and actively engaged in their learning. They engage fully with activities and staff from the moment they enter the nursery. They concentrate well, taking turns and sharing. Children talk confidently about their tasks and can measure their own success. They are enthusiastic when solving problems. Across the primary stages, almost all children are proud of their school and very well mannered. They work very well independently, in pairs and together in small groups. Children feel safe and well cared for. They are aware of their learning strengths and know what they need to do to improve. They need more opportunities to lead their own learning. Staff know the children well and work with them to set individual health and wellbeing targets. Children have extended their knowledge of Scotland from their visits to the Scottish Parliament.

In the nursery, children make very good use of outdoor learning. Achievement is celebrated well in the nursery. Children enjoy looking at photographs and work folders, selecting their best work to display. In the primary classes, children have achieved success as performers in public events such as choir competitions and assemblies. Children develop leadership skills through their involvement in health promotion, by planning and organising fundraising for various charities, and through roles such as play leaders, buddies, house captains and junior road safety officers. The headteacher encourages achievement for all, through regular awards which are given out during every assembly. Children develop their physical abilities by taking part in sports activities such as table tennis, rugby, football, netball and aerobics.

Almost all children in the nursery are making very good progress in their development. They listen well to one another and follow instructions well. Almost all children enjoy developing early writing skills. Children are confident when counting and using numbers in their play. A few older children count confidently beyond ten. Across the primary stages, the overall standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently high. Almost all achieve appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics and most achieve national levels in writing. At the early stages, most children achieve national levels earlier than might normally be expected. However, this early success does not always continue at the later stages. At all stages, children listen attentively and give their views well on a range of topics. Reading skills are well developed and children read fluently appropriate to their level. In writing, almost all children write well for a range of purposes following improvements to the programme. In mathematics, children enjoy learning aspects of mathematics in a real life context. The school has a consistent approach to solving problems in a systematic way, which is helpful. Across the school, information and communications technology (ICT) is used to develop mathematics. This approach should be further developed. In Spanish, children speak with confidence, developing basic conversation skills. Children improve their fitness in fast-paced physical education lessons, which use a variety of exciting activities.

In religious education, children have a very good understanding of Catholic Christianity and are continuing to develop their knowledge of other world religions.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

In the nursery and primary classes, the school has made a very good start to reviewing plans and teaching approaches by using *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff invite visitors to the nursery and use the local community to enhance the curriculum. Children in the nursery have interactive, fun sessions to learn the basics of Spanish. The primary curriculum is broad and balanced with most children benefiting from tasks that are challenging and enjoyable. The school uses a range of ICT to enhance children's learning in various areas of the curriculum. This includes good use of Glow, Scotland's national schools' intranet, podcasting to enhance listening skills and wireless notebooks for internet research skills. Children are developing literacy skills across the curriculum. Practical music-making sessions are provided by class teachers and a visiting member of staff. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of an outside artist who worked with P6/P7 to create a parish stained-glass window. The school's very good approach to health promotion teaches children about making healthy choices and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. All children benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. The school needs to build on children's prior learning in the nursery in order to increase pace and challenge.

Staff in the nursery know the children very well and are responsive to their individual needs. Key workers ensure that those who require support with their learning and those who require more challenge are getting the help they require. Support assistants provide children with a very high quality of care and attention. Children are involved in setting their learning targets. Across the school, most of the time, teachers provide learners with different tasks, activities and resources to help meet children's individual learning needs. Staff work hard to help all children to achieve. The school maintains very thorough records for all children who need additional support. Their progress is

tracked regularly. Support is well targeted to help children learn and achieve. Staff provide appropriate individualised learning plans and specialist support where needed. Further work should be done to involve children fully in the development of these. The school seeks solutions to particular needs. For example, modern technology supports children who can not readily access written materials. At times, a few children are given too much support and would benefit from being given more independence in their learning.

#### **4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?**

In the nursery, parents have daily opportunities to speak informally with staff about their child's progress. The school has effective partnerships with parents through the Parent Teacher Association and the Parent Council. Parents have concerns about aspects of the school buildings. The school should liaise with the authority to discuss possible solutions. Parents are very complimentary about the work of the school. The school makes good use of local businesses, health professionals, the active schools coordinator and local clubs to enhance and support children's learning about health and wellbeing. This includes the *Garden Club*. Staff provide parents with informative written reports on their children's progress and consult them about health education. The school is very good at sorting out any concerns or complaints. Well-planned arrangements are in place for children moving from nursery to P1. The school works well with staff from Holy Cross High School to support children, including those who need additional support, as they move from primary to secondary.

#### **5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?**

Staff are highly committed to improving the school. Relationships and teamwork are very strong. Children are encouraged and supported to take responsibility across the school through their involvement in the

pupil council, buddy schemes, and by leadership within the school's house system. The school achieved a gold award for health promotion. Non-teaching staff contribute very well to the life of the school. Staff are very reflective about their work. Senior staff visit classes, sample children's work and analyse attainment. Staff have improved children's learning experiences by their commitment to detailed improvements within the school improvement plan. They are skilled at sharing learning intentions and success criteria. As a result, children know what they are going to learn and how they can improve. The headteacher, principal teacher and staff all lead aspects of improvement across the school.

## **6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?**

Staff have very high expectations for children's care, welfare, behaviour and development. They know children and their families well. They treat children with respect and dignity. The school is a very caring and inclusive environment. Children are very friendly and polite and almost all have high expectations of themselves. Children engage in a range of activities which help them to understand and appreciate diversity and equalities. Children feel safe and valued in the school. Nursery and primary staff make keeping children safe a high priority. Children's achievements are displayed around the school and this enhances the learning environment. The school provides very good opportunities for religious observance in church and at school assemblies. The parish priest and staff provide very valuable support for children to prepare them for the sacraments.

## **7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?**

The school, including the nursery, has a very clear vision and sense of direction, driven by the headteacher's outstanding leadership. The headteacher is very highly regarded by staff, children and their parents. All members of staff are highly committed to doing their best for children. The principal teacher leads a number of key



developments very effectively. The whole staff team is developing the curriculum very well by using *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff are encouraged to develop their leadership roles through coordinating aspects of the work of the school. As a result of the school's overall strength in leadership at all levels, the school has a very strong capacity to continue to improve and progress further in its pursuit of excellence for all children.

## **8. What happens next?**

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Further increase the impact of the school's strong processes for self-evaluation on children's learning and achievement.
- Continue to improve learning by using *Curriculum for Excellence*.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements. In addition, no recommendations were made.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

Nursery class

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Children's experiences</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>very good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Aileen Monaghan  
18 January 2011

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk) or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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